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GOVERNOR MARTIN O'MALLEY ANNOUNCES HOMELAND SECURITY PROGRESS FOR MARYLAND AND STATEWIDE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW

Officials also announce Port of Baltimore receives near-perfect score on security assessment

BALTIMORE, MD (January 15, 2009) – Governor Martin O'Malley made good on a commitment made during the 2008 State of the State address by releasing a comprehensive report on statewide emergency preparedness. In addition, Governor O'Malley outlined the steps already taken to improve the state's homeland security, including at the Port of Baltimore, which recently received a near-perfect score on a Coast Guard security compliance exam and which served as the backdrop for today's announcement. The Governor was joined today by Maryland Department of Transportation Secretary John Porcari, Maryland Emergency Management Agency Director Richard Muth, and other state and federal emergency management officials.

"The report we're releasing today is a tough, extensive assessment of both our strengths and weaknesses – many of which we've already taken steps to correct," noted Governor O'Malley. "The need is urgent, and with the forward momentum we've started and the impetus from this report, we will make progress towards our goals of a safer State for our families."

In January 2008 during his State of the State address, Governor O'Malley committed Maryland to improving its homeland security by working to better integrate emergency preparedness and emergency information sharing, as well as bringing into service for the first time a truly statewide system of interoperable communications. Since that time, the state has commissioned James Lee Witt Associates, a crisis management and preparedness services consulting firm based in Washington, D.C. that is a part of GlobalOptions Group, to conduct an exhaustive review of Maryland's level of preparedness and offer recommendations for how to improve.

"Governor O'Malley and the State of Maryland have taken bold steps to conduct this extensive review of emergency preparedness in Maryland," said James Lee Witt, Chief Executive Officer of James Lee Witt Associates and former FEMA Director. "I believe that with these recommendations, many of which have already been acted upon by the Governor, will not only make Maryland more prepared, but a leader in emergency preparedness in the United States."

Recommendations in the report range from improving the state's emergency management authority structure, improving communications with local jurisdictions, improving the state's ability to operate during an emergency should the main Emergency Operations Center become unavailable or non-functional, and reform of the Maryland Coordination and Analysis Center's leadership.

Maryland has already taken steps to improve its security and its ability to manage an emergency should one occur. Focusing on a set of twelve, basic core capacities that Maryland and our first responders in every region use as a baseline for evaluating homeland security efforts, state emergency and public safety officials have made a number of internal changes to be more responsive to local government and to Maryland's families including:

- To increase efficiency and optimize preparedness, state officials working to remodel the organizational structures of MEMA and our State Emergency Operations Center, using as a basis the National Incident Management System, or NIMS.
- Working with local partners, Maryland has established a backup emergency operations center.
- To improve communication and accountability, MEMA now holds one-one-one meetings and monthly conference calls with all 26 local emergency managers.
- To further Maryland's goals for efficiency, communication, and accountability, a centralized planning division has been created within MEMA and efforts to provide better and more effective training for MEMA staff are being redoubled.
- MEMA's public affairs and public information office has been revamped, launching among other things a more robust emergency management website and issuing and publishing an agency newsletter.
- Plans for long-term strategic goals, emergency operations, information technology, disaster recovery, and continuity of operations are currently being developed and completed.

In direct response to a recommendation from the Witt Report, Governor O'Malley announced today that he will introduce legislation during the current legislative session that enables the Director of MEMA to directly report to the Governor, eliminating any confusion regarding the line of authority during an actual emergency.

Officials today also announced that during a recent security compliance exam, the Port of Baltimore's public terminals received a near-perfect score from the Coast Guard, a great improvement over a similar exam given by the Coast Guard in 2007. Several security enhancements have taken place at the Port of Baltimore, including:

- Becoming the first major U.S. port to require the federally-mandated TWIC card;
- Beginning a project which will ultimately implement the use of real-time video surveillance on its public terminals;
- Activating the New Terminal Cargo Truck Plaza, which uses real-time video and security checks to verify a trucker's ID and purpose of visit; and,
- Strengthening of perimeter fencing surrounding all of the Port of Baltimore's public terminals.

In the past two years, in addition to the dramatic security improvements outlined above, the O'Malley-Brown Administration has made steady progress to enhance the state of Maryland's homeland security and emergency preparedness, including:

- For the first time, Maryland has begun the preliminary stages that will result in a fully interoperable communications system for all local and state public safety and emergency response agencies throughout Maryland.
- We have upgraded critical detection technology for the State's bomb squads, and have worked with local bomb squad leaders to develop a system for centrally tracking bomb responses.
- We've upgraded the State Police armored response vehicle, and purchased baseline personal protective equipment for all patrol officers in Maryland's five largest law enforcement agencies.
- We've established stockpiles of antiviral medications to protect Maryland's state and local first responders, healthcare workers, and critical infrastructure sector.
- To protect Maryland's key assets and infrastructure, we've streamlined the Critical Infrastructure Protection Program - Maryland's tool for managing critical infrastructure and key resource vulnerability.
- As part of an ongoing effort to improve transportation security, we have established new closed circuit television systems, including at the Port of Baltimore Public Terminals, and expanded existing systems for Maryland's bridges, tunnels, and roads.

The full report can be found by [clicking here](#).